

Governor's Welfare Employment Committee Honors Employers and Employees with TANF Employment Awards of Excellence

DOVER (April 20, 2017) – The Governor's Welfare Employment Committee announced the winners of its 2017 TANF Employment Awards of Excellence as it recognized 39 employers in Delaware who hire, train and maintain positive working relationships with employees who receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits, and 47 TANF clients who have succeeded in the workplace despite the challenges they have faced.

Nominations for the awards were submitted by individuals and organizations from communities across the state, and winners were selected by members of the Governor's Welfare Employment Committee. One award is presented to an employer and an employee from each county, as well as one overall award to an employer and an employee.

"As a committee, what we do is about helping TANF recipients transition to work, raising public awareness, and providing support and guidance," said Greg Gyarmati, chair of the Governor's Welfare Employment Committee and director of human resources at Dover Downs Hotel & Casino.

The employee winners of the 2017 TANF Employment Awards of Excellence, who were honored at a breakfast ceremony April 19 at Dover Downs Hotel & Casino, are:

- New Castle County: Gienavive Johnson
- Kent County: Patricia Milburn

- Sussex County: Valarie Purnell
- Statewide: Akira Collins

The employer winners of the 2017 TANF Employment Awards of Excellence are:

- New Castle County: Dust Away Cleaning
- Kent County: God's Way Thrift Store
- Sussex County: Delmarva Clergy United in Social Actions (DCUSA)
- Statewide: Dover Downs Hotel & Casino

The event was hosted by the Governor's Welfare Employment Committee, the Department of Health and Social Services, the Department of Labor, the Delaware Economic Development Office, and DART. All nominees were invited to the ceremony.

"We all have an attachment to work and to the dignity that comes with a job," DHSS Secretary Dr. Kara Odom Walker said. "The working parents we honored found jobs through our TANF program, and they are raising their families, demonstrating initiative and excelling in their workplaces. That path to self-sufficiency was borne out of perseverance. That is a powerful message of success, and I'm so proud of the work we're doing together."

"The TANF program is yet another valuable resource the State of Delaware is making available to some of our most deserving residents," said Labor Secretary Dr. Patrice Gilliam-Johnson. "We are pleased to be recognizing those employers who help make these opportunities a reality and the employees who continue to serve as stellar examples of the program's success."

In addition to Secretary Walker and Gyarmati, attendees also heard a personal story from Lindsey Hill, a former TANF client who now works as a senior social worker for DHSS' Division of Social Services in Dover. Hill credited a DHSS staff person in Bridgeville who "listened the whole time" when she applied for

TANF benefits and other supports in 2011. Now as a senior social worker, she said, "I might be helping someone the way I was helped."

Calvin D. Brown, president of Technically Inclined in Bear, gave the keynote address. "I want to thank the TANF recipients for believing there is a better way," he said, encouraging those who have found full- or part-time jobs "to bring value to your situation."

A total of 47 employees – 19 from New Castle County, 16 from Sussex County and 12 from Kent County – were nominated, along with 39 employers. The employers nominated were:

- Kent County (18 nominees): The Grocery Basket, God's Way Thrift Store, Integrity Staffing Solutions, Sea Watch International, Perdue Farms, Hardee's, Walmart, International House of Pancakes (IHOP), McDonald's, Dover Downs Hotel & Casino, Matthew Smith Bus Company, American Home Solutions, Bayada Home Health Care, Adecco Staffing, American Maid Services, Dollar Tree, Dover Post and TGI Friday's.
- New Castle County (15 nominees): Dust Away Cleaning, Griswold Home Care, Express Employment Professionals, Kool Kid's Learning Center, Securitas Security Services, Angel Companions, North American On-Site, Latin American Community Center, Beverly's Helping Hands Child Care Center, Ministry of Caring II Bambino Infant Child Care Center, Family Dollar, Panda Express, EDSI Solutions, Always Best Care and Integrity Staffing Solutions.
- Sussex County (six nominees): Epic Health Services, DePaul Industries, Quality Staffing Services, Delmarva Clergy United in Social Action (DCUSA), The Curiosity Shop and Meoli Companies.

To hire a Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipient or to learn more about the TANF employment initiative, contact the Delaware Department of Labor, at 302-761-8085.

In Fiscal Year 2016, the Department of Health and Social Services had 4,976 TANF cases, serving 8,245 children, plus their parents. The average TANF household grant was \$266 per month. TANF is a time-limited program, and work-mandatory clients can receive TANF benefits for a maximum of 36 total months in their lifetimes. To get a monthly TANF benefit, most clients must work or participate in work-related activities for 20 to 40 hours per week, depending on the number of parents in the household and the age of their children.

In Fiscal Year 2016, employment and training vendors served 1,704 clients in Delaware, with 329 clients earning full-time jobs and 408 earning part-time jobs.

To learn more about Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in Delaware, go to the DHSS website.

TO THE MEDIA: Photos of the statewide employee and employer honorees can be downloaded from DHSS' flickr site:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/deldhss/albums/72157682733268606>

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The Department of Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations.

The Delaware Department of Labor connects people to jobs, resources, monetary benefits, workplace protections and labor market information to promote financial independence, workplace justice and a strong economy.